



High Nature Value (HNV) - Farming sustainability

How to improve the social and economic sustainability of HNV farming without losing the HNV characteristics?

The EIP-AGRI Focus Group on HNV farming started work in June 2014 and brought together 20 experts to find answers to this question. The report was published in January 2016.

HNV farming refers to farming systems which produce feed, food and fibre but also contribute significantly to the creation and maintenance of landscapes and habitats. The concept recognises that the conservation of biodiversity in the EU is very reliant upon specific farming systems and practices. However, HNV farming is currently in decline.

The Focus Group identified five 'acceptable' development pathways to support more socially and economically sustainable HNV farming and to improve its long-term viability:

- ▶ networking and cooperation
- ▶ farm diversification
- ▶ increasing the selling price of HNV products and improving access to markets
- ▶ adopting new technologies
- ▶ increasing the physical output of the farm (within specific constraints)

"We all realised that bridging modern research skills and tools with local innovations and motivations is vital for a quest of combining productive agriculture with nature conservation objectives in the context of High Nature Value farming systems in Europe. We need to start asking what research can do for each case."

- Irina Herzon (Finland), expert from the EIP-AGRI Focus Group on HNV farming -

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Ideas for Operational Groups

Potential EIP-AGRI Operational Groups could for example focus on:

- ▶ carrying out studies on market differentiation of HNV products
- ▶ innovative technologies to increase production output
- ▶ involvement of nature conservation people to ensure that HNV characteristics are maintained and not damaged
- ▶ animation and networking by involving a local NGO
- ▶ piloting payment schemes for ecosystem services

Ideas for support for Operational Groups

Effective animation/facilitation can help the development of integrated HNV farming projects by:

- ▶ capturing grassroots ideas from farmers and others
- ▶ bringing the right people around the potential Operational Group project objectives and help partners to connect to each other
- ▶ developing concrete activities and identifying available funding to start up Operational Group projects

Research needs from practice

- ▶ better understanding of HNV farming systems (socio-economic characteristics, economic performance, motivation, social dynamics, trends)
- ▶ analysing the role of innovation in HNV farming systems (from new types of machinery and adaptation of grazing systems to 'retro-innovation' in order to enhance the socio-economic sustainability of HNV systems)
- ▶ developing better technical and management solutions for HNV farming

Other needs

- ▶ the need to disseminate experience and practical knowledge
- ▶ the need for networking and co-operation at all levels

More ideas for Operational Groups and research needs available in the Focus Group report

More information:

[Focus Group webpage](#)

[Final report](#)

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